

EXHIBIT A

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Ansar al-Islam (Iraq, Islamists/Kurdish Separatists), Ansar al-Sunnah

A profile of a militant Islamist Kurdish separatist movement seeking to transform Iraq into an Islamic state.

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Introduction

Ansar al-Islam (Supporters of Islam) is a militant Islamic Kurdish separatist movement seeking to transform Iraq into an Islamic state. Mullah Krekar, also known as Faraj Ahmad Najmuddin, reportedly founded Ansar al-Islam in December 2001 with funding and logistical support from al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. The group has ties to Iran and the U.S. State Department in 2003 asked a UN Security Council sanctions committee to add Ansar al-Islam to its list of entities and individuals are linked with al-Qaeda (PDF), the Taliban, or Osama bin Laden. Such a move obligates UN member states to freeze the group's assets. It initially operated under the name Jund al-Islam (MEIB) (Soldiers of Islam), but has since dropped the name. The group continues to target secular Iraqi Kurds-particularly members of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Since the beginning of the war in Iraq, U.S. officials have accused Ansar al-Islam of training and deploying suicide bombers against U.S.-led coalition troops in Iraq.

Ansar was named a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the U.S. Department of State on March 22, 2004 and is considered an active force in northern and central Iraq today.

Origins of Ansar al-Islam

The roots of Ansar al-Islam extend back to the mid-1990s. The group consists of Islamist groups that splintered from the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (IMK) in northern Iraq. Michael Rubin, a resident scholar in foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, said the Islamist splinter organizations included various groups (MEIB) called Hamas, Tawhid, and the Second Soran Unit, along with others. Ansar al-Islam announced its official inception a few days before the September 11 attacks. One month before, leaders of several Kurdish Islamist groups reportedly visited the al-Qaeda leadership in Afghanistan seeking to create a base for al-Qaeda in northern Iraq (MERIA). In late 2003, Abu Abdullah al-Shafii (a.k.a. Warba Holiri al-Kurdi) reportedly took over leadership of Ansar from Mullah Krekar, who has been in exile in Norway for allegations of terrorism in his home country and links to Ansar al-Islam as the organization's leader.

Al-Shafii claimed in September 2003 the organization's name had changed from Ansar al-Islam, but he had not disclosed the new name. Experts have speculated he may have been referring to an offshoot

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of Ansar al-Islam called Ansar al-Sunnah (Supporters of Sunni) or Defenders of the Tradition. The name change meant a shift in strategy aimed at Ansar al-Islam's appeal beyond its Kurdish origins. Ansar al-Islam adheres to a rigid Salafi ideology. Its founding declaration states "jihad in Iraq has become an individual duty of every Muslim (MEIB) after the infidel enemy attacked the land of Islam" and its members "derive their jihad program and orders from the instructions of the holy Koran and the Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah (tradition)." The goal of Ansar al-Sunnah is to achieve in Iraq an Islamic country where Islam and its people are "strong," without the influence of Western cultures, and to expel Western influence from the homeland. Ansar al-Islam and Ansar al-Sunnah members still operate inside of Iraq, but are largely based in predominately Sunni Arab areas in central Iraq.

Mullah Krekar and Ansar al-Islam

Mullah Krekar, who is believed to have started Ansar al-Islam, has been living as a refugee in Norway since the 1990's. Krekar has been accused of financing terrorist organizations within Iraq and sending money to them from Norway. In 2002, his refugee status was revoked because Norwegian officials claimed Krekar had traveled to Iraq and had helped fund and orchestrate various terrorist organizations, which he denied. In 2003, the Norwegian government ordered Krekar to be deported to Iraq, but the order has not been implemented due to the security environment in Iraq.

Norwegian law also prohibits the country from exporting a refugee back to a country where the death penalty will be inflicted upon the accused.

In December 2006, the U.S. Treasury Department designated Krekar as an individual who was providing financial support to terrorist organizations, including allegations linking him to Ansar al-Islam, Ansar al-Sunnah and al-Qaeda. The department's press

release said the designation "freezes any assets the designees may have under U.S. jurisdiction and prohibits all financial and commercial transactions by any U.S. person with the designees."

On November 7, 2007 the Supreme Court of Norway ruled that Krekar is a threat to Norway's national security, upholding the February 2003 decision by the government to deport him to Iraq. It is still unclear when Krekar will be deported due to Iraq's death penalty laws.

The emergence of Ansar al-Islam as threat

Ansar al-Islam operates primarily in northern and central Iraq and claims the second largest number of Sunni jihadist attacks in Iraq after Al-Qaeda in Iraq. The group targets coalition forces, Iraqi government and security forces, and Iraqi political parties. Ansar al-Islam made headlines in September 2001 when it ambushed and killed forty-two PUK fighters. Ansar al-Islam continued to organize small terrorist threats (*CSMonitor*) in the war era of Iraq, but their major terrorist attack came three years after the occupation in Iraq started. On February 1, 2004, during Eid al-Adha, the Muslim festival that celebrates the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael to Allah, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan were celebrating the holiday in Erbil, Iraq, when suicide bombers entered the PUK and KDP headquarters and killed 109 (MEIB) people, including KDP Deputy Prime Minister Sami Abdul Rahman.

In January 2005 the group assassinated Sheik Mahmoud Finjan (Mahmoud al-Madaeeni), an assistant to senior Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, in the Salman Park area of Baghdad as he was returning from evening prayers.

The transformation into Ansar al-Sunnah

On September 1, 2001, al-Tawhid, Hamas and Soran Forces announced the formation of Jund al-Islam. The group declared *jihad* (holy war) against secular and other political parties in Iraqi Kurdistan deemed to have deviated from the "true path of Islam," according to a report by the U.S.-based rights monitor Human Rights Watch.

Jund al-Islam, led by al-Shafii, seized control of several villages near Halabja, Iraq in September 2001 and established a local administration governed according to *Sharia law*. Mullah Krekar formed Ansar

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al-Islam as a merger of Jund al-Islam and a splinter group of the Islamic Movement in Kurdistan. In the area then under its control, Ansar barred women from education and employment, confiscated musical instruments, and banned music both in public and private, banned televisions, and threatened the use of Islamic punishments of amputation, flogging, and stoning to death for offenses such as theft, the consumption of alcohol, and adultery, said Human Rights Watch. The off-shoot group has continued to be a threat, but acknowledged in September of 2007 that it was formally derived from Ansar al-Islam, and changed its name back to the original. "Given our responsibility in maintaining the principles of Islam, the unity of Muslims, and to deal with existential issues that shall determine our survival, we have decided to continue our work under the name of the Ansar al-Islam organization," read a statement issued by Ansar al-Sunnah's leader al-Shafii in 2007.

Where does Ansar al-Islam operate?

Originally based in an enclave wedged between Iraqi Kurdistan and Iran, it has been active throughout northern Iraq. While Ansar is not known to have operated outside Iraq, it was suspected of involvement in a plot to attack a NATO summit (BBC) meeting in Istanbul in June 2004, though the attack was unsuccessful. Police in Turkey seized guns, explosives, bomb-making booklets and over 4,000 compact discs with training advice from Osama bin Laden. Some analysts say Ansar has received logistical support from Iran and Syria and recruited members in Italy. Some analysts say Iran assists Ansar, harboring its militants within its borders and providing a route for foreign fighters to enter Iraq and join Ansar's ranks. "It's very clear that there are fighters streaming in over the Iranian border tied to this group," says Jonathan Schanzer, an expert on militant Islam at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Iran has denied reports of links to the group.

Targeting 'Collaborators'

The victims of targeted assassination by Ansar have included government officials, politicians, judges, journalists, humanitarian aid workers, doctors, professors, and individuals thought to be collaborating with foreign forces in Iraq, including translators, cleaners, and others who perform civilian jobs for the U.S.-led Multi-National Force in Iraq (MNF-I). Insurgents have directed suicide and car bomb attacks at Shi'a mosques, Christian churches, and Kurdish political parties with the purpose of killing civilians.

These attacks started to take place in the context of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the ensuing military occupation. During the occupation, tens of thousands of civilians died, which caused the emergence of many more insurgency groups and the subsequent attacks on public officials. Head members among Ansar, as well as other groups such as al-Qaeda and the Armed Islamic Group, justify their actions by saying that the U.S. illegally invaded Iraq and killed thousands of Iraqi civilians since March 2003.

Future of Ansar al-Islam in Iraq

In May 2007, an agreement was announced between some members of Ansar al-Sunnah, Ansar al-Islam, the Islamic Army in Iraq and the Army of the Mujahadeen to form a united group called "The Jihad and Reformation Front." The group is trying to adopt a moderate approach to the Islamic doctrine and urges Islamic militants to avoid side battles at the expense of the main battle against the American occupation.

Kara Driggers, who monitors jihad web sites for the Terrorism Research Center, said that the groups who formed the Jihad and Reformation Front did so in response to the cruel practices of al-Qaeda in Iraq, and are challenging the authority of al-Qaeda.

"The important difference between them and al-Qaeda is that they are nationalist groups," Driggers says. "They are fighting for Iraq, and solely for Iraq."